

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 208 383

CS 006 336

AUTHOR Feldmann, Shirley C.
 TITLE Theoretical Bases for a Humanistic Model for Training Reading Teachers and Implications for Future Directions.
 PUB DATE 81
 NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (26th, New Orleans, LA, April 27-May 1, 1981). For related documents, see CS 006 332-335.
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Graduate Students; Higher Education; *Humanistic Education; Humanization; *Models; *Preservice Teacher Education; Program Effectiveness; Reading Instruction; *Reading Programs; Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Role; Undergraduate Students; Urban Universities
 IDENTIFIERS City University of New York City College

ABSTRACT

One of five papers discussing the humanistic model used in the training of reading teachers at City College of New York, this paper reviews the theoretical bases for the humanistic model and discusses its implications for the training of reading teachers in the future. The described model includes sequencing of the students' field experiences, helping students to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and using different community placements to sharpen professional skills. The paper notes that the model was derived from the work of educators who viewed the learner as central to the learning experience and thus insists that motivation, values, and attitudes be an integral part of the teacher training program. The paper concludes that feedback from students about the program has been positive. (FL)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

THEORETICAL BASES FOR A HUMANISTIC MODEL FOR TRAINING READING TEACHERS AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Shirley C. Feldmann
Graduate School, CUNY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Shirley C. Feldmann

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Theoretical Bases for a Humanistic Model for Training Reading Teachers and
Implications for Future Directions*

Shirley C. Feldmann
Graduate School, CUNY

In the four presentations you have just heard the speakers discussed aspects of the undergraduate and graduate programs for training reading teachers, aspects that were modified or accented in order to implement our humanistic model. Peggy Schwarz discussed how we sequenced the applied parts of the curriculum, starting the students with one-to-one reading experiences with a child and moving them through several steps, eventually to group work in language arts using a project method. Such progression of experiences gives the students opportunity for successful interaction with pupils as they become more competent, as well as better understanding of the complex interrelations of the teacher, the pupil and curriculum.

Ruth Adams described our efforts to help potential teachers define their own role in the teaching-learning situation, especially as they identify what strengths and experiences they have that could enhance learning situations. She emphasized that affective, as well as cognitive areas, must be explored to help teachers realize their potential competences, and she showed how the latter may affect the values and attitudes teachers bring to the learning situation.

Bessie Watkins-Mincy told of procedures used in our classes to help sensitize students to their own behavior as they work with urban pupils. Through role-play and simulations teachers are helped to identify their own biases and subjective feelings, but more importantly, to see how to go beyond these to reach satisfactory relationships with pupils, relations that will enhance the teaching-learning situation.

*Paper given at annual meeting of The International Reading Association on April 29, 1981 in New Orleans.

Joan Raim told of various community and school placements which are used in the programs. She showed how the differing characteristics of the placements were useful in helping students to shape their programs and expectations for learning, as well as to build their own professional skills and attitudes. She showed how the dynamics of the various teaching-learning situations were used to sharpen professional skills. In summary, each of the speakers described some of our efforts to use the urban setting in which City College is placed to strengthen our humanistic training model. Each paper also described facets of the total program in which humanistic approach made our goals more realizable.

A restatement of our working model, as well as its origins and the goals we have set for it now seems in order so that the facets described earlier may have some coherence. The origins of the model come from several sources. One source is the work of early psychologists and educators, such as John Dewey, Eric Fromm, Albert Maslow, Arthur Jersild and Carl Rogers, all of whom have emphasized the need for viewing the learner in an unified, integrated way, and for using the learner as the point of departure for the curriculum.

The work of these men is well known to all of you, so it does not bear repeating here; the tenets of a humanistic approach come from the works of these people, ^{with} their emphasis on the role of direct experience in learning, the need for awareness of one's own capabilities and feelings when interacting with others, the importance of values and attitudes to cognitive functioning, the role of individual differences in learning styles, and so.

Another strong influence on our model was the tradition already established in our own reading center at City College many years ago, by Professors Albert Harris and Florence Roswell. Each of these educators has contributed immeasurably to reading education as a whole; as a result, at our reading center

we have long had pupil-centered learning in reading programs, and a psycho-therapeutic approach for pupils who have trouble learning to read. In times when it was unfashionable to talk about motivation and attitudes we were worrying about the content of books for urban children and how best to match materials and children for more effective teaching.

A third influence on our model comes from the department to which we belong at City College. The Dept. of Elementary Education, which has many diverse programs in it, bilingual education, early childhood education, open education, and such; all, however, are tied together by a strong commitment to train good teachers to work in urban schools with efforts to help such teachers to begin to break through the disabling circumstances which now are crippling educational efforts in the inner city.

Starting with these strands and helped along by the works of the later interpreters of educational practice, such as Holt and Silberman, we have evolved over the past few years a set of general goals for our program. A primary goal of any humanistic program is to help the individual learn to cope with him/herself, with others and with environment in ways that are self satisfying; our goals were set to help potential teachers mobilize their own strengths and capabilities in ways that would make them more effective teachers in urban settings. Such goals posit person-centered learning, therefore, which takes into account the cognitive capabilities as well as the needs, values and attitudes of the individual. In other words, cognitive and affective modes are intertwined to make teaching-learning situation more meaningful to and effective for the individual. Such goals do not, of course, supersede the imparting of a body of theory and knowledge and the training for the specific competences needed by reading teachers. Considering that teacher education programs in

New York State are by law couched in mastery and competence modes, the above goals had to be accomplished within the prescribed frame-work approved by the State Dept. of Education, which had set high standards of excellence in both the knowledge and competence areas.

There were other factors that also shaped our program, especially in the past few years. These factors were derived from the changing nature of urban education. Prospective reading teachers in both the undergraduate and graduate programs were preparing to teach in urban schools where they would teach poor and minority children, representing many ethnic groups. Many of the children they would work with had already had failure experiences with learning; thus such children might well be dispirited and unmotivated, with low-self esteem and irregular learning-to-learn skills. These prospective teachers would also discover that the support systems traditionally found in schools had gradually eroded, so that supplies, supplementary staff, interested parents and supportive administrative personnel might be at a minimum, or even be absent in some cases.

In addition, some of the students, themselves from diverse ethnic groups, often came from atypical academic backgrounds, entering college late, raising their families first, or coming through a career ladder program. These students seemed less confident about their own capabilities and were more hesitant to work out new ideas in their course work. Thus, it seemed to the reading staff that more emphasis might be needed in the affective areas and in individualized instruction.

These indications were borne out by an extensive questionnaire sent to all the present and former students a few years ago, asking what modifications in the program might be useful to their own professional competences. Students overwhelmingly asked for more guided experiences with pupils, for help in individualizing instruction and in working with diverse problem students. The data from

this study greatly influenced our thinking in modifying the training programs. Goals were set through a series of clearly articulated steps to help students to develop themselves as professional reading teachers, being aware of and using their own capabilities to create optimal learning situations for their pupils. This meant that the students needed skills to discern the capabilities of their pupils as well as learn to shape learning situations to touch the needs of their pupils, rather than merely to fit their pupils to a prescribed reading curriculum. In other words, students needed help in becoming more flexible in assessing and in planning curriculum procedures for their pupils.

Much time and patience were needed to begin to implement these goals. In addition to the introduction of sequencing of course experiences and variety of placements already discussed, it soon became apparent that the reading instructors themselves had to rethink their own teaching-learning strategies in coursework. New procedures such as simulations and games, role-playing, videotapes, modeling behavior, demonstrations of curriculum and assessment techniques were worked out for individual student conferences as they found that individual counseling was an important way of keeping one's finger on the pulse, so as to speak, of a student's progress. Each semester each student's work was evaluated by the faculty who met as a group; instructors then scheduled conferences to talk with these students who seemed to fall below the expectations set for them. The group suggested procedures to give these students more experiences in their areas of weakness. Students were expected to give their energies to the program as much as were the instructors. Both instructors and students needed to be committed toward a more highly individualized program in order that active learning could take place.

Has the program worked? Has a humanistic approach been worth the extra time and effort spent on it? As with many other non-funded educational efforts

most of the available time of the instructors was given to program development. As a result, no large-scale formal evaluations have been undertaken. There is, however, some evidence that the program is working, evidence that might be of interest to this group.

First, the faculty have clarified their goals for the program, and in doing so have evolved much more coherent and conceptually sound course offerings. In addition, the many meetings and discussions needed to reorganize the program have resulted in them being more confident about their own views and procedures. They no longer seem concerned about "covering all there is to know" or following the latest XYZ reading method. The City College "point of view" in reading has become known in the city, and students often come to study at the college because they have heard positive comments about our point of view. These are, of course, side advantages and do not justify the reorganization we undertook. They merely point out that change does touch faculty positively as well as students.

Other indications that the model may be working are that students do seem to benefit from the individualized work, as fewer of them drop out of the program now than before. Our graduates do well in finding reading jobs in the area. Some even have impressive positions in local school systems and others are in the classroom busily pondering over their teaching-learning problems. We find our graduates in school systems wherever one of us is visiting; someone usually comes forward to ask whether he/she is still remembered from the class of X, in year Y. Ex-students also volunteer to tell us, after classes are finished, that their supervised work with pupils was a central factor in helping them to see what education really was about.

Even more positive reactions to our program come after students have been professional reading teachers for awhile. There seems to be a positive relation-

ship between the quality of evaluation and time-on-the-job for many ex-students. Perhaps the demands during the program were so heavy that the forest was not understood because of the trees, to paraphrase a metaphor. In any case, we feel certain that these limited and perhaps biased kinds of feedback indicate success with our training model, however, limited, it is.

What have we learned that might be useful in future years? The first and strongest impression is that education is a most complex and delicate procedure, and the more one knows about the factors involved in it the closer one may come to adjusting the learning environment to take account of those factors. This means that not much generalization can be made yet from one learning situation to another. Instructors committed to a humanistic model then, have also committed themselves to continue to learn and to experiment and to reshape curriculum as they continue to work in such a program. The program has not remained quite the same from year to year; it continues to evolve with new experiences, and circumstances. Thus there may be little "safety" in such an approach; continuous learning means continual thinking on the part of the participants.

Another strong impression is that research and evaluation must go hand-in-hand with curriculum development in such a program, since questions arise continually about every aspect such an endeavor that cannot be answered from past experience. In fact, program development such as this may not survive for too many years unless there is a support system that allows for disciplined inquiry along with the program development. An evaluative support system helps ultimately to ensure the quality of a program; unfortunately time and money are needed for such support systems. In our view, they are not a luxury but a necessity for continuance of the program.

A last impression is that future programs for teacher training may need more cooperative effort from others outside of a School of Education and the local education system. Parents, other community agencies and other local services may be needed to truly individualized education, since the burden may be too complex

for a single institution to manage well. Our model has attempted to use some of these other support systems, but only to a small degree. We have opened the door only a crack to provide a more flexible education for our future teachers, and we must continue to explore other avenues for doing so.